



November 29, 2009

ANALYSIS OF KIDS UP FRONT

MGIS 317 L04 GROUP 410 – THE SUBSCRIBERS

INSTRUCTOR: DR. MOHAMMAD RAHMAN

PREPARED BY:

OMAR KHAN

LARA SCHMITZ

SANYA LAKHANI

BRIANNA DONOVAN

JING YU

This report is submitted in accordance with the formal requirements for the course MGIS 317 in the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. This report has been prepared as part of an academic exercise under the guidance of the Instructor, Dr. Mohammad Rahman, and contains information only and not advice. Please note that one or more students prepared this report and recommendations are implemented solely at the responsibility of the client or involved organization. The authors, the Instructor, the Haskayne School of Business, and the University of Calgary assume no responsibility for the results obtained in its implementation.

Introduction

“Almost overnight, the Internet has gone from a technical wonder to a business must.” With this quote, venture capitalist Bill Schrader effectively conveys the significance of maintaining an Internet presence for any business. This holds true for non-profit organizations as well, as they strive to maintain their existing revenue streams while expanding into new markets. Non-profit organizations are increasingly using the Internet as a means to increase their market base (Olson and Boyer 2005), through offerings such as online donations and brand promotion. Thus, it is clear that regardless of an organization’s size or profit motive, having an efficient and effective website is crucial to drawing and maintaining a market base for the organization.

This report addresses the website of Kids Up Front Foundation Calgary, a relatively small non-profit organization. It begins with a description of the organization’s competitive context, followed by an analysis of the organization’s website using eight critical success factors. Finally, a number of recommendations are made to improve the website’s efficacy.

Competitive Context

The Kids Up Front Foundation, with the vision “one little ticket, one big lift” (Kids Up Front Foundation 2006) is a non-profit organization providing access to arts, culture, sports and recreation events for children who would otherwise not get the opportunity. The foundation works closely with its partners (corporations, the arts and entertainment community, individual donors and recipient agencies) as an intermediary, distributing unused tickets to and creating special events for underprivileged children.

Originally founded in 2000 in Calgary, Kids Up Front has grown dramatically over the last decade. Kids Up Front has now expanded into Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto, and in 2006 a national Kids Up

Front foundation was incorporated to oversee and support the work of the regional programs (Kids Up Front Foundation 2006).

Kids Up Front Calgary is one of the four local chapters of the Kids Up Front foundation, providing Calgary area youth with the opportunity to go to sporting events, plays, concerts, trips out of town, horseback riding, along with many other activities. The organization runs two main programs. The first, 'Can't use your ticket?' collects donated tickets from corporations, entertainers, and the general public, and distributes these tickets to agencies working with underprivileged children. The second program, 'Kids Count', is event-based, sending underprivileged children on vacations, horseback riding trips, or to parties with famous athletes (Kids Up Front Foundation Calgary 2006).

Overall, Kids Up Front plays a critical role as the intermediary between children in need and the people and organizations wishing to help them. Its business model is quite unique, as it is the only organization providing "nourishment of the spirit" (Kids Up Front Foundation 2006) for underprivileged children through the distribution of unused event tickets. As a result, Kids Up Front has no direct competitors, allowing it to focus primarily on expanding its market base, instead of struggling to survive in a competitive market. However, since most non-profit organizations compete with one another indirectly for donors (Chetkovich and Frumkin 2003), Kids Up Front must ensure that it maintains its brand awareness.

Currently, Kids Up Front utilizes its website primarily for informative purposes, by giving donors and partners more information about the work Kids Up Front does in the community, the program outcomes, and how to get involved with Kids Up Front. The website is also used to provide recognition to donors, partners and supporters for their contributions to the organization.

Methodology

The analysis of the Kids Up Front Calgary website (<http://www.kidsupfront.com/CAL-about.htm>) was assessed through both quantitative and qualitative measures across eight critical success factors (see table 1 below). The first step in this analysis was a weighting of each critical success factor (on a scale of 1-5) based on its importance to the organization.

The Kids Up Front Calgary website was then graded on each CSF individually on a scale of 1-5. The criteria used to grade the website for each CSF varied, and thus will be dealt with in the separate CSF sections of this report.

Finally, all of the scores were multiplied by their weight to obtain a final overall score for the Kids Up Front Calgary website.

To assist in the assessment of the Kids Up Front Calgary website, a usability study was

conducted. This study involved 6 participants, who varied in their age, ethnicity, gender, and experience with Kids Up Front. The participants performed timed tasks (designed to mimic tasks performed by a potential donor or by a partner agency) and filled out a survey regarding their experiences. Quantitative data obtained from this study was standardized for typing speed and connection speed before any statistical analysis was conducted. See appendix A for more information on the study.

Table 1. Critical success factors used to analyze the Kids Up Front Calgary website, and their relative weights. See each CSF section for details on how weights were assigned.

Critical Success Factor (CSF)	Weight (scale of 1-5)
Add value	5
Focus on a niche...then extend	3
Maintain flexibility	1
Get the technology right	4
Manage critical perceptions	5
Excellent customer service	4
Create effective connectedness	2
Understand Internet culture	3

Critical Success Factors

CSF 1: Adding Value

If an organization is able to “convince visitors to remain on [their] website...and build rapport with them” (Korgaonkar, O'Leary and Silverblatt 2009), their online offering is adding value to the organization's products or services, or to a business process. There are six main ways to analyze how well value is being added to an organization's products or services – convenience, informative value, disintermediation, re-intermediation, price, and choice (Huff, et al. 2000). Of these, the most relevant methods of value addition to Kids Up Front are convenience, choice, informative value and re-intermediation.

Weight and Scoring Criteria

Adding value is the fundamental purpose behind organizational websites, and as such it has high relevance to any organization. Additionally, this critical success factor encompasses a number of website and business process design concepts. These factors combined led to a relative weighting of this critical success factor as 5 out of a possible 5.

Kids Up Front Calgary's website was assessed for adding value through convenience (2 points), choice (1 point), informative value (1 point), and re-intermediation (1 point), arriving at a final score out of 5 points.

Analysis

To add value through convenience, an organization's website must “provide easier access to [its] goods or services through the web” (Haskayne School of Business MIS Department 2009). Easier access to services can be achieved through efficient organization of the website, easily accessible contact information, and the utilization of indexing/search features (Greenspan 2002). Kids Up Front's website

for the most part tends to overwhelm the user, and its basic formatting techniques (bolded headings and block text) make it difficult to find information, thus discouraging usage. Additionally, information that one would expect to be prioritized is often buried within lengthy web pages – for example, the Programs page lists the ‘Scalping’ section before the ‘Get Involved!’ section, thus implying that ticket scalping has greater importance; in reality, however, scalping is a minor if not non-existent issue, while getting people to donate tickets and money is a high priority for the organization. The website additionally has no search feature, and while their partners and sponsors lists are alphabetized, they are not indexed. Overall, the Kids Up Front website scores 0.5 out of a possible 2 points for adding value through convenience.

The addition of value through choice implies offering a variety of different products or services online, especially those not available offline (Haskayne School of Business MIS Department 2009). Kids Up Front’s website does not accept donations of tickets, nor can it directly accept monetary donations. However, the site does promote the physical donation of tickets effectively, and to a lesser extent also promotes monetary donations through CanadaHelps.org. As a result, the website scores 0.5 out of 1 for choice.

The Kids Up Front website adds great informative value to the organization. There is a great deal of information available on the website, including recent events, the organization’s contact information, a full list of agency partners, sponsors and other organizations, and information on how and where to donate tickets. As a result, the answer to nearly any question a person or organization would have about Kids Up Front can be found on the website. For this reason, the website scores 1 out of 1 for informative value.

Finally, Kids Up Front’s business strategy involves differentiating the organization as an intermediary between agencies working with underprivileged children and potential corporate, individual and

entertainment donors. As a result, the website for Kids Up Front plays a re-intermediation role by providing the information needed for sponsors to quickly donate tickets, while at the same time allowing the organization to select the most appropriate partner agencies that have registered to receive tickets. However, the website's lack of interactivity and heavy slant towards individual donors serves to alienate partner agencies and the very youth the organization works to help. Currently, the website does not allow donors to see thank-you cards from ticket recipients (limiting the personalization of the donation experience, even though donors do get physical copies on occasion), and also does not allow for online ticket donation. As a result, the website scores 0.5 out of 1 for re-intermediation.

Overall, the Kids Up Front website scored a 2.5 out of a possible 5 points for adding value. The website is underutilized, and while it may be sufficient for the purposes of informing site visitors, Kids Up Front Calgary has many options that can be exploited to greatly increase the added value of the site.

CSF #1: Adding Value – 2.5/5

CSF #2: Focus on a Niche... then Extend

In the majority of instances, carrying an 'average' or 'normal' lineup of products and services will not lend itself to success on the Internet, because the barriers to entry for an Internet-based venture are remarkably low when compared to other types of businesses (Huff, et al. 2000) As a result, focusing on a niche market, with a specifically defined product offering aimed at satisfying particular market needs, is a far more successful strategy. By focusing on a niche market, an organization minimizes competition and is able to gain a loyal following. This niche can then be used as a launching pad, allowing the organization to expand both geographically and into a larger market segment. Successful examples of niche expansion include Bid.com (starting with a Dutch auction niche) and Intuit (which has gone from a support website to a full-fledged financial services website) (Huff, et al. 2000).

Weight and Scoring Criteria

For a non-profit, as a result of increasing competition for donors (Olson and Boyer 2005), starting with a niche market is vital to the short term viability of the organization. Once the organization is firmly established in its niche market, it can move on to the expansion phase, increasing its market share and thus also increasing the aid it is able to provide to its target beneficiaries. As a result, focusing on a niche and expanding from that niche is important; however, it would likely be more vital to a for-profit business than it is to a non-profit organization. Thus, this CSF was weighted at 3 out of 5 points.

To grade this CSF, points were awarded for the presence of an initial niche market (2 points), vertical expansion to date (1 point), horizontal expansion to date (1 point), and being ready for further expansion (1 point)

Analysis

Kids Up Front Calgary started with and firmly established itself within a niche market – they still remain the only charitable organization in the city dedicated to the nourishment of the spirit through the donation of unused event tickets to underprivileged children. Since Kids Up Front had a specific niche market, *and* the organization was able to establish itself in this niche effectively, it gets 2 points.

The niche market beginnings of Kids Up Front positioned the organization well for expansion. First, Kids Up Front underwent a geographic expansion via the incorporation of Kids Up Front locations in Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto. This type of expansion is termed horizontal development, in that it is just an increase in volume, not in product offering (Todrin 2008). Finally, in 2006, a national umbrella organization was developed and incorporated to oversee and support the local chapters, a move that has positioned Kids Up Front even better for future geographic expansion. However, since Kids Up Front doesn't directly deal with the children, and also because Kids Up Front does not promote their brand, there is relatively little recognition of the organization in the general public. This is likely a large factor

explaining why individual ticket donations to Kids Up Front are fewer than both corporate and entertainment organization donations. As Kids Up Front is actively promoting and pursuing horizontal expansion, it scores a full 1 out of 1 point for this sub-criterion.

The second type of expansion is vertical expansion, or increasing your presence within the value chain. Kids Up Front has begun to vertically expand to some extent, by offering the 'Kids Count!' program to go along with the 'Can't Use Your Ticket?' initiative. Since Kids Up Front plays a much larger role in planning for 'Kids Count!' events as compared to the 'Can't Use Your Ticket?' initiative (where Kids Up Front has no say in the event tickets being 'supplied' by donors), this represents a vertical expansion towards the supply side (e.g. by planning the activity, Kids Up Front is effectively 'manufacturing' the event instead of simply obtaining tickets for an event created by someone else). However, this program is relatively small and rare, and thus Kids Up Front only scores 0.5 out of 1 for this sub-criterion. Finally, it appears that Kids Up Front has positioned itself extremely well for expansion, both geographically and by increasing their market segment. As a result, the organization gets a score 1 out of 1 point for prospective future expansion.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored a 4.5 out of a possible 5 points for this CSF. The organization is expanding geographically and is also providing a broader range of donation methods and programs, and will be able to expand their operations quite easily as soon as resources allow for this.

CSF #2: Focus on a niche...then extend: 4.5/5

CSF #3: Maintain Flexibility

The maintenance of flexibility entails an organization positioning itself to be ready to "make radical shifts in strategy in order to be successful" (Huff, et al. 2000). Managing this CSF along with focusing on a niche market can be a fairly difficult balancing act, as an organization needs to be focused on their

current product offering, but also ready to entirely change their strategy in a very short period of time in the event that the current strategy fails. A slow response on the part of an Internet company can be the difference between success and bankruptcy, as demonstrated by the failure of First Virtual Holdings Inc. (Huff, et al. 2000).

Weight and Scoring Criteria

While the maintenance of flexibility is vital to the success of an e-commerce business, where success and failure depend on Internet sales, it is far less relevant for a local charitable organization whose business is largely *not* e-commerce. Since the primary purpose of the Kids Up Front website is informative, and the business strategy of the organization involves a relatively stable concept (there will likely be unused tickets to events for as long as people have events to go to), this CSF is one of the least important. As a result, this CSF was given a weight of 1 out of a possible 5 points.

Scoring of this CSF was based on 2 points for the organization's preparedness to respond to unexpected externalities, and 3 points for the website's flexibility to cater to different stakeholders based on prevailing economic conditions.

Analysis

For Kids Up Front, making radical shifts in business strategy is not a relevant concern. Thus, the organization will not need to reinvent their entire strategy bi-annually. However, Kids Up Front may be forced to make minor shifts in how they market themselves depending upon prevailing economic conditions. As an example, if the price of oil were to drop significantly, it is quite likely that corporate support for the organization would drop. In this scenario, Kids Up Front would have to alter their marketing techniques to cater more to individual donors or entertainment organizations such as the Calgary Flames. Another issue is that of discrepancies in information found on the website. Due to the poor organization of data on the website, when information on is updated in one place, it often is not

updated in another. This leads to discrepancies in the website, which in turn has the effect of driving potential customers away (Jones 2009). An excellent example of this is the ticket donation locations – on the homepage for Kids Up Front Calgary there are two ticket drop-off locations listed, but on the ‘Make a Donation’ page, there is only one ticket-drop off location listed. In fact, half of the participants in the usability study were unable to find the address of the second drop-off location, simply because they only looked on the ‘Make a Donation’ page. Overall, the Kids Up Front website can be compared to a database that has not been normalized; when a change is made to the website, there is a large probability that a data integrity error will occur, because the change needs to be entered into multiple pages on the website. Due to this, the Kids Up Front website is not very flexible to change. Overall, Kids Up Front scored 1 out of 2 for their organizational preparedness, and 1 out of 3 for the flexibility of the website, leading to a total score for this CSF of 2.

CSF #3: Maintain flexibility: 2/5

CSF #4: Get the Technology Right

In order to ‘get the technology right’, one must consider a number of factors – the level of commercial web presence, the decision to rent or own equipment, security management, and scalability (Huff, et al. 2000). The level of web presence is a function of interaction between the user and site, as well as whether the information on the site is static or dynamic. The decision to rent or own equipment is an important one, especially for small organizations that usually do not have the resources (financial or human) to support an IT system by themselves. Security management is a huge issue whenever personal and/or banking information is being shared with an organization; once again, smaller organizations are less likely to find security management costs affordable, and are thus more likely to outsource these activities. Finally, to get the technology right, one must also consider the future – what happens to the site when volume drastically increases? Will the site be able to function at its normal speed, or will it

crash? Answering these questions is critical to assessing whether or not an organization is using the 'right' technology.

Weight and Scoring Criteria

Regardless of whether an organization is large or small, non-profit or for-profit, local or global, choosing the right technology for the organization's needs is a very important task. Choosing the wrong technology can have incredibly high costs, and since IT projects have been found to have a 25% failure rate regardless of their size (Sauer, Gemino and Reich 2007), the potential for loss is very high. This is especially dangerous for non-profit organizations that are generally stretching their budgets already (Olson and Boyer 2005). As a result, this CSF was assigned a weighting of 4 out of 5.

In order to arrive at a final score out of 5 for this CSF, points were awarded for the level of commercial web presence (3 points), the decision to rent equipment or own it (0.5 points), scalability (0.5 points) and security management (1 point).

Analysis

The Kids Up Front website serves primarily as an information resource, and thus it is a considerably simple website with effectively zero user interaction. As such, the vast majority of the website would be considered to be at a "basic level", providing static information (Huff, et al. 2000). The one portion of the website that may be considered to be interactional in nature would be the 'What's New' page, though even this page is not updated on a consistent basis. It is important to keep in mind the amount of work required to increase a website's operational level for e-commerce – it has been estimated that a site becomes 10 times as difficult to operate for each move up one level (i.e. from basic to interactional or from interactional to transactional) (Huff, et al. 2000). However, the benefits of doing so far outweigh the costs, especially in today's society. For having a basic level of web presence, Kids Up Front gets 1 point out of 3.

In terms of renting versus owning their technological equipment, Kids Up Front tends to follow a 'buy it and customize it' approach. The organization's database is a special, personalized database within Microsoft Access™ which was developed with zero face-to-face contact by a developer in Victoria, BC. The Kids Up Front website was designed by Annica Web Design. Kids Up Front Calgary is currently looking at redeveloping their website, and would be using a template already adopted by Kids Up Front Edmonton, but customization of the web pages will be done by the organization itself using Adobe™ Dreamweaver® software. While one would expect a small organization like Kids Up Front to be renting equipment, the 'buy-and-customize' choice is a smart business decision, as it greatly increases the scalability of both the database and the website. By having ownership of their database, Kids Up Front will be able to relatively easily modify their database to deal with increasing volume. Overall, Kids Up Front scores 0.5 out of 0.5 for the decision to rent or own, and 0.5 out of 0.5 for scalability.

Security management is one of the most important issues to consider, especially when dealing with monetary transactions. As noted in Huff et al. (2000), a website with a basic operational level of e-commerce will effectively need "no extra security considerations". However, as the organization is concerned with obtaining ticket and monetary donations, many website users will be looking for information to prove the security of their donation. To address this, the organization's registered charitable number and anti-scalping policy are both made quite prevalent on the website. The issuance of tax receipts also persuades users that Kids Up Front has a secure website. Finally, the only way to donate money online is via CanadaHelps.org, a third party site that is Visa Verified, increasing the credibility of Kids Up Front significantly. As such, for security management, Kids Up Front gets 1 point.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored 1 point for operational web presence, 1 point for scalability and rent/own decision, and 1 point for security management, leading to a total score of 3 points.

CSF #4: Getting the Technology Right: 3/5

CSF #5: Manage Critical Perceptions

Perception is defined as one's awareness of their environment through physical sensations (Merriam-Webster 2009); put simply, it is someone's experience of what is going on around them. Managing the critical perceptions of a website requires an organization to design its website in such a way as to be attractive to potential customers. Huff et al. (2000) notes that it also means that an organization must strive to ensure customers perceive three things about itself through the website – its presence, its brand, and its trustworthiness.

To ensure that a potential customer gets the perception of presence, an organization needs to make that individual feel as if the organization has physical existence, and that it is not simply a virtual construct (Huff, et al. 2000). This connection with reality can take many forms – one common method is through personalization, where an organization displays pictures and short descriptions of some staff members to give the organization a 'face'.

Brand strength, defined as "the relative power of attraction of a given brand versus other brands" (Woodside and Walser 2007), is positively influenced by brand exposure, and by the brand's accessibility into one's working memory. The accessibility into working memory of a brand, in turn, is influenced by a person's experience with the brand, and by how easy or 'catchy' the brand name or tagline is.

Finally, Huff et al. (2000) state that out of all possible perceptions a customer may have about any organization operating on the Internet, a customer's perception of trustworthiness is by far the most critical. Due to the lack of face-to-face interaction (or for that matter, any interaction with a human), the Internet fosters a sense of inherent distrust that must be overcome by organizations in order to be successful. To build a trusting relationship with a customer (or donor), an organization can simplify the process for customer to personally contact the organization, maintain communication with the customer throughout the e-commerce process, secure the transaction process to make the customer

feel safe, provide an easy-to-find and useful Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page, display their privacy policy clearly, and remove any 'surprises' during the transaction (Huff, et al. 2000).

Weight and Scoring Criteria

The experience a customer has with a website strongly influences their perception of the organization as a whole, and can determine whether or not the customer returns to the organization later, thus making the management of critical perceptions crucial to the success of any organization's online endeavors. Additionally, in today's society an organization's website is often the first point of contact, from which the customer forms their initial impression of the organization. As a result, managing critical perceptions was given a weight of 5 out of 5.

In scoring this CSF, Kids Up Front points were available for establishing an offline presence through the website (1 point), building a brand with sufficient exposure and accessibility into memory (1 point), and building trustworthiness through (a) simplified human contact and a professional look and feel (1 point), (b) secured transaction processes and visible privacy policy (1 point), and (c) the presence of an FAQ page (1 point).

Analysis

Since Kids Up Front provides a service as an intermediary, as opposed to a good (or even a direct service), there is a lack of tangibility which reduces a donor or sponsor's perception of the presence of Kids Up Front. To counter this situation, Kids Up Front has a 'What's New' page with pictures of events; however, the only person representing the organization in any of the pictures is Kari Scarlett, the executive director. The lack of other staff members, as well as a glaring lack of pictures of (or thank you cards from) children serves to further disconnect the donor from the organization *or* the recipient, thus taking away from the legitimacy of Kids Up Front. This also holds true for the 'Contact Us' page of the website, where there are no pictures or even short descriptions of any staff members listed, save for a

mention of their title, which gives the organization a very impersonal feel. Overall, while Kids Up Front has taken steps to increase perception of their offline presence through their website, a number of improvements could still be made, resulting in a score of 0.5 out of 1 for this sub-criterion.

On the other hand, Kids Up Front has an incredibly catchy and effective brand name, which relates directly to the services they provide, and also places emphasis on the organization's priority – children. A catchy phrase like this serves to increase the accessibility of the brand into memory. However, the brand exposure of Kids Up Front is very limited, as currently potential donors are unable to see any of the benefits of donating tickets online (even those who donate, while they do receive physical copies of thank-you letters with every third ticket donation, are unable to find more if they wished to do so). This can be compared to the Kids Up Front Edmonton site, which has a 'scrapbook' containing thank-you cards for people to view. The other factor limiting the brand exposure of Kids Up Front is their limited utilization of partnerships with organizations such as the Calgary Stampeders and Calgary Flames. As a result of this, very few people in the general public have heard of the organization. Based on the strength of the brand name, but relatively low brand exposure, Kids Up Front scored 0.5 out of 1 in this sub-criterion.

Finally, the perception of the trustworthiness of Kids Up Front is absolutely vital to the organization's success as a non-profit organization. The first factor addressing this is the website's overall look and feel, which was rated quite poorly by all usability test subjects. When asked about how safe users would feel donating money to Kids Up Front, half of the users responded they would *not* feel comfortable. When asked how Kids Up Front could make them feel safer, two of these users replied that the tackiness of the website itself made them distrust the organization. However, when the usability test subjects began to attempt to contact Kids Up Front, their trust of the organization increased, because it was very easy to find contact phone numbers, facsimile numbers, physical address, and e-mail addresses on the Kids Up

Front website. Furthermore, phone calls were answered quickly, and users felt their queries were answered to their satisfaction by a knowledgeable employee on the other line. However, since the website did not have a look and feel conducive to building trusting relationships with customers, Kids Up Front scored 0.5 out of 1 for this sub-criterion.

The second aspect of trustworthiness was the prominence of the privacy policy and the securing of transactions. Kids Up Front does have a privacy policy available on their website, which is clearly worded and comprehensive. Unfortunately however, the privacy policy is only readily accessible from the homepage (it is accessible from every page on the website, but the link is buried in a list of 32 links at the very bottom of each page, and thus it is hard to find). Additionally, the only transaction a user can complete on the Kids Up Front website is a monetary donation, and to complete that the user must go to a third party (CanadaHelps.org). This is an effective system, as Kids Up Front likely would not have the resources to ensure the safety and security of their donors' banking information. A larger organization like CanadaHelps.org, which specializes in accepting donations for charitable organizations, has the resources and security features in place to ensure donor safety. Also adding to the perception of trustworthiness is the receipt of thank-you cards from children and thank-you letters from Kids Up Front. Since a clear privacy policy is in place and transactions are outsourced to a more secure vendor, Kids Up Front scores 1 out of 1 for this sub-criterion.

Finally, frequently asked questions (FAQ) pages help potential customers find the most important and relevant information about the organization quickly. These FAQ pages serve to dissuade some of the customers' fears, and thus they build up trust between the organization and the individual. Kids Up Front Calgary does not have an FAQ page, instead forcing users of the website to navigate long, cluttered and poorly organized web pages to find the information they need. One usability study subject became so frustrated with trying to find a piece of information on the website that they stated "sitting

here searching for information may just change my mind about donating – it’s not worth the hassle”.

Had there been an FAQ page, this user would likely have had her answer in seconds, rather than being frustrated for nearly five minutes before giving up entirely. Since there is no FAQ page, Kids Up Front scores 0 out of 1 for this sub-criterion.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored 2.5/5 for this CSF, due to the lack of an FAQ page, the unprofessional look and feel of the website, and poor brand exposure.

CSF #5: Manage Critical Perceptions: 2.5/5

CSF #6: Excellent Customer Service

Providing excellent customer service can be simplified into two key aspects; these aspects as identified by Huff et al. (2000) are responsiveness and ‘high touch’, or accessibility. Improving responsiveness for non-profit organizations involves improving relationships with donors and streamlining the donation process (Polansky and Sargeant 2007). In order to provide excellent customer service, organizations need to look at both their accessibility and responsiveness with respect to their customers.

There are many ways to assess the accessibility and responsiveness of an organization. One measure of accessibility concerns the number of different methods by which the organization can be reached, including phone, facsimile, e-mail, via a website, in person, or by regular mail. For a website specifically, accessibility has been defined to include the ability of the website to function appropriately across multiple browsers and hardware/software platforms (Teoh, et al. 2009). Additionally, the accessibility of a website encompasses issues such as addressing frequently asked questions via an FAQ page (Huff, et al. 2000) and making the website easy to use for those with disabilities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). When conducting a usability analysis, an accessible site will be characterized by

an insignificant difference between novice and experienced users in completing the same task. Lastly, all web pages must load quickly and with the correct information (i.e. no broken links).

Weight and Scoring Criteria

All businesses need to serve their customers well. This holds equally true for non-profit organizations such as Kids Up Front. As an intermediary organization, Kids Up Front has to deal with various 'customer' bases, including donors, sponsors, partner agencies, and to a limited extent even the children themselves. Since Kids Up Front has to not only provide excellent customer service, but also provide it to various different groups, this CSF was given a weight of 4 out of 5.

Scoring for this CSF was based on a number of criteria. Firstly, Kids Up Front was graded out of 1 point for providing contact information for various communication methods. Secondly, the organization was graded out of 1 point for its ability to function across different hardware and software platforms. Thirdly, the charity was given a score out of 1 point based on usability study participants' opinions of the website's ease of use (the study subjects rated 'ease of use' on a scale of 1-5 while performing two tasks, and their scores were averaged for each task. Each task contributes 50% of this score). Fourthly, Kids Up Front was graded out of 1 point based on the steepness of the learning curve required for the website, as determined by the difference in time required for experienced and novice users to complete tasks. Finally, the organization was given a grade out of 1 point based on the percentage of hyperlinks which were functioning properly (i.e. were not broken). Since the FAQ page was scored in CSF 5, it will not be scored again here.

Analysis

The 'Contact Us' page of the Kids Up Front website provides four e-mail addresses, two phone numbers, a fax number, and a mailing address, without even requiring the site user to scroll along the page (Kids Up Front Foundation Calgary 2006). Additionally, if the user scrolls down the page, they are able to see

the mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for the Board of Directors and Officers of the organization. This is an excellent source of information for customers, and as a result, Kids Up Front scores a full 1/1 in this criterion.

However, when the Kids Up Front Calgary website was compared across different web browsers, there were a number of web pages which would only display correctly in Microsoft's Internet Explorer™ browser, and not in the Mozilla Firefox™ browser. An example of this is shown in Figure 1, which depicts the 'What's New' page fully loaded in Mozilla Firefox™ (version 3.55) on the left, and Microsoft Internet Explorer™ (version 8.06) on the right. In order to see the content on the page in Firefox, the user has to scroll down the page. However, it appears as if the page has not loaded, and during the usability study, users were observed waiting for this page to 'load' for up to 25 seconds after it was finished loading.

Figure 1. The 'What's New' page on the Kids Up Front Calgary website, fully loaded, in the Mozilla Firefox™ browser (left) and the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser (right).



These errors appear to be random as opposed to systematic, but as a result of inconsistencies like the one shown above, Kids Up Front's website scored only 0.5/1 in this criterion.

During the usability study, participants performed two tasks – in the first task, they were playing the role of a potential partner agency, seeking to obtain information on how to partner with Kids Up Front. In the second task, participants played the role of a ticket donor, and attempted to find information regarding the donation of tickets on the website. For the 'partner agency' task, the 'Ease of Use' scores

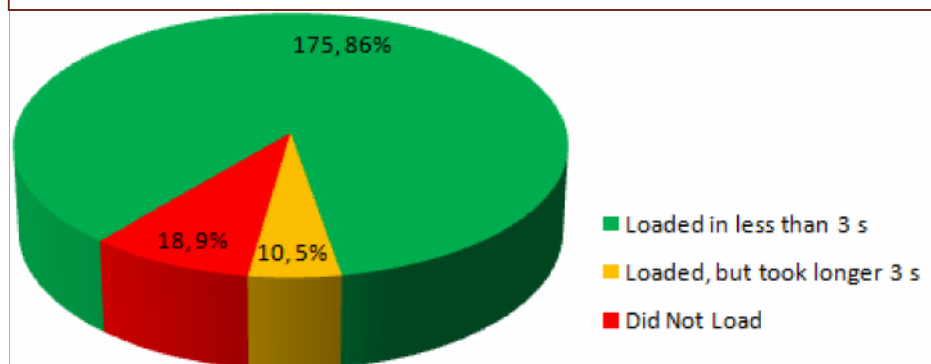
were distributed around a mean of 1.50/5, with a standard deviation of 0.547. For the 'ticket donor' task, the 'Ease of Use' scores were distributed around a mean of 2.00/5, with a standard deviation of 0.632. The means were divided by 10 and then summed (giving a total score out of 1, weighted equally among the two tasks), to give a final score of 0.35/1.

The fourth point was based on the steepness of the website's learning curve. Theoretically, if a novice user takes significantly longer to perform a task compared to an experienced user (after standardizing for connection speed, typing speed and reading speed), it is likely that the site is difficult to navigate. Conversely, if there is no significant difference between experienced and novice users, the site's navigation is likely intuitive. For the 'partner agency' task, novice users were found to take significantly longer than experienced users (one-tailed two-sample t-test, $t = 2.6972$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$, $\mu_{\text{novice}} = 376$ s, $\mu_{\text{experienced}} = 58.8$ s) to complete the task. Similarly, for the 'ticket donor' task, novice users once again took significantly longer to complete the task than experienced users (one-tailed two-sample t-test, $t = 5.6719$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$, $\mu_{\text{novice}} = 345$ s, $\mu_{\text{experienced}} = 86.8$ s). Since both tasks showed a significant learning curve for the Kids Up Front website, this criterion is scored as a 0/1.

Finally, every link on the Kids Up Front Calgary website was clicked and tested for how long it took to load. For the most part, the Kids Up Front Calgary website loaded very quickly, with 86% of all pages loading within three

seconds (a prior usability assessment of Ebay.ca by Khan (2008) had determined that users found load times greater than 3-4 seconds to be "too

Figure 2. Web page loading times for 203 Kids Up Front Calgary links



long”). However, as shown in Figure 2, nearly one out of every ten links tested was broken. The final score for the Kids Up Front website for this criterion was 0.65/1.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored 2.5/5 on this CSF, largely because of the learning curve and frustration experienced by users during the usability assessment.

CSF #6: Provide Excellent Customer Service: 2.5/5

CSF #7: Create Effective Connectedness

Creating effective connectedness is related to building an online presence, which in turn allows an organization to stand out from amongst its competitors. Creating effective connectedness has three main parts. The first is increasing search engine visibility – research has shown that only 1% of Internet users will look beyond the third page of results from a search engine (Zhang and Dimitroff 2005). An organization can attempt to ensure it is in the top three pages through a technique known as search engine optimization (SEO), which includes, among other things, the effective use of *metadata* (data that describes other data; for example, a number of keywords that describe the contents of a web site). As Zhang and Dimitroff (2005) determined, even making minor changes to a website (such as including keywords in the title *and* full text of the page, as well as repeating keywords within the full text of the site) can significantly increase that website’s ranking in search engine results. The second component of effective connectedness involves cross-linking with other websites to create so-called ‘web-wheels’; when a group of similar sites all link to one another, they will tend to become a hub of information, and will also see their search engine rankings increase as a result. Finally, when considering effective connectedness, an organization must also consider the impact of advertising its website, both online and offline. As Huff et al. (2000) states, “the key point is that you cannot put up a web page then wait for the world to beat a path to your door. You also have to cut the path through the Internet jungle, and then spend time and money keeping the vines from growing back.”

Weight and Scoring Criteria

Creating effective connectedness is useful for any organization. However, this relevance of this critical success factor to Kids Up Front currently is limited, as the organization has such a specific niche. Thus, marginal improvements in search engine ranking are not likely to be useful to the organization, as very specific keywords must be typed into the search in the first place. Keeping in mind that increasing brand awareness is becoming an area of concern for Kids Up Front, this CSF was given a weight of 2 out of 5.

In scoring this CSF, one possible point was available for effective use of metadata, one point for effective titles for web pages, one point for use of advertising (both offline and online) and two points for cross-linking with other websites.

Analysis

The Kids Up Front Calgary web site does make use of metadata, with keywords such as ‘Canadian kids (sic) charity’ and ‘tickets for kids’. However, the majority of the keywords (‘tickets for kids’ being the only exception) are related to the words ‘charitable organization’ or ‘charity’. Thus, while a person searching on Google™ for a children’s charity could find Kids Up Front, but a person searching for ‘sell my unused ticket’ would not be able to find the organization. Due to its niche, Kids Up Front does not even cross the radar of people who are not specifically looking for it, and the metadata on the site is reflective of this fact. The site is also very inconsistent in terms of page titles – some are incredibly vague (“Kids Up Front Foundation Calgary” on the ‘What’s New’ page), others obscure (“<MMString:LoadString id...” on the Programs page), and others have good formatting (e.g. “Kids Up Front Calgary Sponsors and Partners”). In terms of advertising, Kids Up Front does not do much due to their limited budget as a small, local non-profit organization. However, their website is prominently displayed on brochures and employee business cards for the organization, an excellent step given the financial constraints restricting

conventional advertising. Overall, Kids Up Front gets a 0.5/1 for use of metadata, 0.5/1 for use of titles, and 1/1 for advertising.

Kids Up Front Calgary has done some cross-linking with their agency partners and sponsors. However, while the website has an entire list of all sponsors, partners, corporate ticket donors, and agency partners, none of these organizations have any descriptions attached to them, and very few of them actually have links available. Out of the organizations that do have links to their website, a number are outdated and/or broken links. As a result, Kids Up Front scores 1/2 in terms of effective cross-linking.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored 3/5 on this CSF; the most immediate concern with regards to creating effective connectedness for Kids Up Front is increasing the quality and quantity of their cross-linking with other sites.

CSF #7: Creating Effective Connectedness: 3/5

CSF #8: Understand Internet Culture

As the Internet has grown, it has evolved its own cultural values and customs. As such, when any organization 'goes online', it would do well to respect these norms, as ignoring them will turn users away from the website (Huff, et al. 2000). Important concepts to remember include making the website easy to understand and navigate, avoiding the use of spam (large amounts of unwanted e-mail) or forced registration, under- or over-utilization of graphics, and creating a frequently asked questions page.

Weight and Scoring Criteria

As the importance of the Internet has grown, so too has the importance of respecting the Internet's customs. Organizations that fail to do so quickly find themselves being negatively portrayed by the very medium they try to exploit (for example, see <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com>). As such it is

important for all organizations to consider the Internet culture in designing their own website. However, since this CSF is mainly composed of smaller details as opposed to big ideas, it was weighted at 3/5.

Points for this CSF were awarded for ease of navigation and effective organization (2 points), maintenance of convenience and integrity (by not requiring registration and not sending spam) (1 point), and overall visual appeal (2 points) .

Analysis

One of the main reasons that customers leave websites without making a purchase is that they experienced difficulties while navigating the website; on top of that, these customers are then less likely to revisit the site (Schaffer 2000). As mentioned in the discussion of providing excellent customer service, usability study participants found the Kids Up Front website to be rather difficult to use, and gave a mean score of 1.67/5 for organization. Participant comments indicated that “[Kids Up Front] need to organize their information better”, and that the organization should “boldly write important information and [use more] useful headings, like ... ‘Donate Now’”. There are two key problems with the organization of the Kids Up Front website – firstly, the content is improperly prioritized, lending importance to the wrong information (e.g. On the ‘Make a Donation’ page, tax receipt information is mentioned before the section on how to donate). Secondly, most pages on the website are formatted into a ‘wall of text’, with long paragraphs and few bulleted lists, though the organization does make use of subheadings. Overall, Kids Up Front scores 0.5 out of 2 in organization and ease of navigation.

Kids Up Front does not ask anyone to register for anything on the website unless the individual chooses to make a donation, and the organization does not utilize mass e-mailing techniques. As a result, Kids Up Front scores 1/1 on this criterion. Finally, visual appeal, defined as the design of the website in terms of audiovisual characteristics and creative elements (Korgaonkar, O'Leary and Silverblatt 2009). The appeal of a website then correlates with the users’ attitudes towards the organization, as well as whether or

not the user planned to return to the site (Van der Heijden 2003). The results of the usability study of Kids Up Front showed that participants on average rated Kids Up Front badly on visual appeal – mean scores were 2.22/5 for use of fonts and colors, and 2.27/5 for the use of graphics on the site. General complaints in regards to the visual appeal of the site were a lack of color, hardly any pictures of children, and far too much reading for the average user. The lack of an FAQ page was also complained about. Thus, Kids Up Front received a score of 1/2 for visual appeal.

Overall, Kids Up Front scored 3.5/5 on this CSF; while the organization respects the Internet norms looking down upon spam and forced registration, their website is relatively poorly designed, and as a result it tends to frustrate users.

CSF #8: Understand and Respect Internet Culture: 3.5/5

Summary of Results

The weighted scores obtained by Kids Up Front for each of the CSFs are listed in Table 2.

Critical Success Factor	Score (/5)	Percentage Score	Weight	Weighted Score
Add value	2.5	50%	5	2.5
Focus on a niche	4.5	90%	3	2.7
Maintain flexibility	2	40%	1	0.4
Get the technology right	3	60%	4	2.4
Manage critical perceptions	2.5	50%	5	2.5
Excellent customer service	2.5	50%	4	2.0
Create effective connectedness	3	60%	2	1.2
Understand Internet culture	3.5	70%	3	2.1
TOTAL	-	-	27	15.8

